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## Introduction

Dominican Transnational Migration

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On May 30, 1961, the nightmare was over. General Rafael L. Trujillo, the despot who had ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron fist for almost thirty-one years, was assassinated by a group of conspirators. Trujillo's death brought about the collapse of his bloody dictatorship and ushered in a period of rapid and intense changes in the Dominican Republic. Up to then, Dominican migration had been relatively small and sporadic, but the end of the Trujillo regime unleashed social, political, and economic pressures that had been accumulating for decades. First by the hundreds, and then by the thousands, Dominicans started migrating: from country to town, from the interior to the capital, and from the Dominican Republic to the United States (see table 1.1) and other countries. The political and economic upheaval of the ensuing four decades further accelerated these trends. Hundreds of thousands of Dominicans now reside outside their country of origin. It is a massive migration of diasporic proportions.<sup>1</sup>

Starting in the late 1970s, several book-length works began examining different aspects of Dominican migration.<sup>2</sup> So far, its study has produced excellent case study monographs by distinguished sociologists and anthropologists. However, these tend to be single-author works that concentrate on a specific aspect of the Dominican migratory experience, and mostly on New York City's Dominican population (e.g., Hendricks 1974; Georges 1990; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998). There are still no multi-author edited works published in the United States on the interdisciplinary study of Dominican migration that unite the different perspectives on the Dominican migratory experience. This book fills that void by examining the large-scale flow of Dominicans across international borders, and studying how they are becoming more transnational and transcultural. If transmigration is understood as the process of crossing over diverse social

**Table 1.1. Dominicans Admitted into the United States, 1931–2000**

Period	Number
1931–1940	1,150
1941–1950	5,627
1951–1960	9,897
1961–1970	93,292
1971–1980	148,135
1981–1990	252,035
1991–2000	335,251

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2003.

Note: These figures represent individuals admitted as permanent residents.

and cultural boundaries, and tying together the values of local, national, and global traditions (García Canclini 1990; Portes and Zhou 1991), then Dominicans are transnationals. Moreover, their transcultural nature has allowed them to develop a broader cultural identity that rearticulates their *dominicanidad* (Dominicanness).

This book also contributes to the study of the Dominican migratory experience in two more ways. First, while still emphasizing the New York Dominican experience, this work moves beyond New York City-centered studies by including multi-disciplinary perspectives on other Dominican overseas communities (Spain, Providence, and South Florida). Though Dominicans in New York City (and environs) still represent the bulk of the overseas population, the presence of Dominicans in other parts of the United States and overseas has increased considerably (see table 1.2). Within the United States, large—and growing—Dominican communities now exist in Puerto Rico, Miami, Providence, and Boston.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, besides the large Dominican community in Spain, Dominicans have a growing presence in Venezuela, St. Maarten, Antigua, Curaçao, St. Thomas, Italy, Switzerland, and other countries in Europe. Obviously, New York City remains vital to the understanding of Dominican transmigratory processes (and that is reflected in this work in the number of contributions that deal with New York’s Dominicans), but in order to fully understand the transnationalization of the Dominican people we must go beyond the New York City case and examine the transmigratory experiences of other Dominican overseas communities. Transnational practices among Dominicans in Miami, Providence, and Madrid seem to differ in scope and size from those among New York City’s large Dominican community and may even force us to reconsider previously held notions about transnationalism.

Table 1.2. Dominicans in the United States, by States of Greatest Concentration (1990 and 2000)

State	1990 Census	Percentage	2000 Census	Percentage	Percentage growth	2000 est. <sup>a</sup>	Percentage	Percentage growth <sup>b</sup>
New York	357,868	68.80	455,061	59.49	27.16	652,347	58.18	82.29
New Jersey	52,807	10.15	102,630	13.42	94.35	143,317	12.78	171.40
Puerto Rico	41,193	7.92	56,146	7.34	36.30	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	34,268	6.59	70,968	9.28	107.10	107,009	9.54	212.27
Massachusetts	30,177	5.80	49,913	6.53	65.40	73,646	6.57	144.05
Rhode Island	9,374	1.80	17,894	2.34	90.89	25,187	2.25	168.69
Connecticut	3,946	0.76	9,546	1.25	141.92	13,326	1.19	237.71
U.S. Total	520,151		764,945		47.06	1,121,257		115.56

Sources: Logan 2001; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing.

a. Estimate from Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, University at Albany, N.Y. ([www.albany.edu/mumford](http://www.albany.edu/mumford)).

b. Compared to 1990 U.S. Census data.

Second, this book is also a multidisciplinary study of the Dominican transmigrant experience that combines the different insights of the social sciences and the humanities. Topically and spatially, we employ a diversity of perspectives and approaches by including scholars from different academic and geographical locations. Therefore, to the traditional socioeconomic interpretations of the Dominican experience in New York City, we add contributions on identity, education, literature, and music, providing a fuller view of the rich human tapestry of Dominican migration. Transnationalism has traditionally been the realm of anthropologists and sociologists who specialize in migration. As such, their definition of what is—or is not—transnational is often limited by disciplinary boundaries. Often, certain themes and transnational practices are overlooked, ignored, or rejected simply because they do not fit into traditional disciplinary theoretical schemes. This book goes beyond those traditional disciplinary boundaries by employing approaches from various social sciences and humanities disciplines, and by broadly extending the concept of transnationalism to other practices common to transmigrants, such as long-distance political participation, hybrid musical expressions, literary production, and the reorganization of family structures and values.

### The Case of the Dominican Republic in a Transnational Perspective

The Dominican Republic provides a textbook example of a transnational migration; one that has served as a theoretical basis for the development and refinement of transnationalism as a theoretical construct (see Georges 1990; Guarnizo 1994, 1997). The concept of transnationalism has revolutionized the way one looks at migration. Though transnationalism has been around for some decades now, it was not until the 1990s that it became an object of sustained academic inquiry. In the past, migration was considered a major and definitive step in an individual's life—often with no expectation of ever returning to his or her native homeland. Nowadays, modern transportation provides easy and cheap travel back and forth between host and receiving societies. New communications technology allows migrants to stay in touch with relatives and developments back home. Thus, migration is now visualized (under the optic of transnationalism) as a multilevel, multinational phenomenon that encompasses a complex web of interconnected locations. Moreover, the traditional concepts of “host” and “sending” societies have practically lost their meaning in light of globalizing trends in which economic exchange, political sovereignties, social structures, and even cultural practices transcend national boundaries.

According to Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-

Szanton, transnationalism refers to “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (1992, 1). Moreover, “immigrants who build such social fields are designated ‘transmigrants.’ Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (1992, 1–2). More recently, Nina Glick Schiller has refined the concept of “transnationalism” by reserving its use to “the collective outcome of multiple forms of transnational processes,” thus it would be more appropriate to speak simply of “transnational migration” or “transmigration” (1999, 117n. 2). In this work, we will employ the term “transnationalism” to refer to the body of theory developed throughout the 1990s to examine the processes of transnational migration—largely a result of the trendsetting work of Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton.

Transmigration goes far beyond the conventional movements of the past to a degree that was impossible decades ago. Up to the mid-twentieth century (around World War II), migration was still considered a mostly one-way road—though it is now recognized that many migrants returned home and managed to maintain regular contacts with their relatives in the “old country.” The literature on migration was then based on—and mostly reflected—the particular experiences of the millions of European migrants who arrived on the shores of the United States. These migratory trends changed rapidly after World War II. As such, transmigration is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is the result of profound transformations, such as “the globalization of capitalism with its destabilizing effects on less industrialized countries; the technological revolution in the means of transportation and communication; global political transformations such as decolonization and the universalization of human rights; and the expansion of social networks that facilitate the reproduction of transnational migration, economic organization, and politics” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, 4).

The first of these transformations—the globalization of capitalism—lends novelty to transmigration, while its impact on less industrialized countries further explains its emergence. Global capitalism, now reaching practically every corner of the world, has disrupted traditional economies, making them more dependent on the external sector. Increased foreign investment in tourism, agribusiness, and assembly industries has reshaped peripheral countries by moving them from their traditional economic activities into new, export-oriented activities (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 9). This shift has not only been economic, but has also impelled the physical move-

ment of people from rural areas to urban centers. Bloated primary cities—with extensive industrial areas—now dot the developing world as a result of these economic trends. Unfortunately, global capitalism has not solved the economic problems of less industrialized countries. Rather, it has displaced millions of individuals who now look unsuccessfully for work in the new economic sectors. The huge gap between the supply and demand for jobs, and the new consumer values created by global capitalism have forced the surplus labor force of these peripheral countries to migrate to core countries in order to try to improve their economic situations (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994, 11–12, 23–27). Thus, transmigration is primarily an economic phenomenon, though it also has political and social ramifications.

Transmigration is different, not only for its causing factors, but also for the myriad ways in which it develops. For example, early twentieth-century migrants who arrived in the United States were motivated by the ideal of political freedom and economic opportunity in the United States, the country that they came to adopt as their own. Coming to the United States usually involved a long journey by ship, sometimes with no expectation of return. Nowadays, transmigrants arrive mostly attracted by the ideal of economic opportunity, but not with a clear objective of establishing an “American” identity or a permanent home in the United States. Also, their trip usually takes just hours, which adds a touch of temporal relativity to their journey.

Recent advances in transportation and communications technology have not only facilitated the relocation of peoples from peripheral to core countries, but also the maintenance of close contacts with their countries of origin. While the jet plane now puts any global destination within a few hours’ reach, technological innovations such as the telephone, fax, wire transfers, the Internet, videos, cable TV, cassettes, and previously recorded foreign TV programming help transmigrants maintain very close economic and emotional bonds with their relatives living overseas. As a result, there is a greater interplay between “host” and “sending” societies than was possible half a century ago. Transmigrants create social networks that link them to their countries and often to the multiple destinations (involving two or more countries or regions within them) that have become part of their migratory journey (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994, 7). These new migrants move within a web that connects several locales. For example, it is not rare to find a Dominican migrant in New York City who is part of social networks that include Providence, Miami, or Puerto Rico, maybe even Spain or Venezuela, and certainly more than one town in the Dominican Republic.

These spatially extended, web-like networks help further migration by providing prospective migrants with the contacts and information that will

facilitate their arrival and survival in the host society. Social networks also provide access to “role models” that prospective immigrants may emulate. Furthermore, transnational social networks act as transmitters of cultural practices among several locales. They bring “foreign” culture into the sending society, supply “home” culture to transmigrants overseas, and in the process mediate the creation of new, hybrid cultural forms.<sup>4</sup> In the economic arena, social networks help sustain formal and informal transnational economic activities ranging from individual-level petty trading to large-scale foreign investment. Finally, social networks are also transnational political networks. Transmigrants operate within several sovereignties and jurisdictions. They may be undocumented immigrants or they may hold more than one citizenship. They may co-participate in several political systems or refrain from political action. Such is the case of Dominicans, who since 1994 may become citizens of a foreign nation without losing their Dominican citizenship or their political rights. In any case, transmigration has radically altered our conception of “local” and “national” politics.

Cultural theorists argue that transmigration unites people by exchanging space, language, and cultural elements (García Canclini 1990, 1995). The exchange is facilitated by the rapid movement of people who concentrate in communities in large industrialized cities. Metropolitan centers such as New York, Madrid, Caracas, and San Juan have suffered a rapid transformation owing to the constant flow of people from different backgrounds, ideologies, and social strata. This transformation has affected the ethnic structures, languages, and cultural patterns of many urban populations. Thus, the migrants’ need to stay in touch with those left behind, coupled with advances in communications technology, have given them the accessibility to contact the latter, and to maintain bonds with their native culture—while blending it with their newly acquired one. It is a way of coping with the sense of displacement so common among immigrants. It is also a process of building cultural bonds among multicultural and multiethnic individuals and communities in a given society. In the case of Dominicans, the exchange occurs, mainly, among themselves—between those nationals in and outside the homeland who exchange experiences, norms, and attitudes. Different factors contribute to this constant exchange between Dominican nationals on and off the island. There is a sentiment, a longing to return, a desire to be home that pushes Dominicans to visit the country constantly. Moreover, as shown above, there are also economic, political, and social factors that contribute to the constant movement of overseas’ Dominicans to the island—especially from New York—and to their habitual communication.

Traditionally, many Dominican migrants “retain strong cultural and economic links with their homeland even when they live in distant places over

long periods of time” (Duany 1997, 198). These links still exist, but nowadays, Dominicans, both *aquí* (here) and *allá* (there) are more receptive to cultural exchanges and to “border crossings.” For Dominicans to cross borders is to find a solution to their own social, political, and cultural reality. It is a pathway to retain their identity and to express it among the different ethnic groups with which they come into contact (Molina 1998a, 79).

Transmigration also creates a system for exchanging names, space, practices, and even ways of thinking and of living. It tends to juxtapose two very diverse worlds: the modern and the traditional. Typically, it is the migrant’s world in the host country that overlaps the traditional world left behind. The crossover of norms and values between countries or societies permits migrants to expand and integrate, without reservation, other people’s reality and culture into their native one. For Dominicans, the exchange has influenced their understanding and acceptance of the “other” world. It is a means to alleviate the burden of strong, absolutist, oppressive cultural patterns and ideologies imposed on them. Transmigration has transformed Dominican culture into a vast global phenomenon that makes individuals receptive to changes from abroad. For example, traditional Dominican names—such as Juan, María, and Altagracia—representative of a local, peasant culture mainly sustained by religious images, are being affected by the cultural exchange. These names are now often replaced by Michelle, Sean, and Dianne, which are not representative of the Dominican Hispanic-Catholic tradition. This name-changing represents the acceptance of the linguistic identity crossover Dominican culture and society have experienced for the last thirty years—as it is particularly observed among the second generation of Dominican immigrants or the latest arrivals.

Urban experiences are constantly being transported by Dominicans from a more developed world, such as New York City, to the Dominican Republic. For Walter Benjamin, the city “is a place of disintegration of experience” (Gilloch 1996, 23). That disintegration leads to the transportation of experiences from one place to another. Patricia Pessar argues that Dominicans have experienced the back and forth or “swinging” migration that modern technology makes possible (1995, 69). The rapid displacement of Dominicans all over the world and their constant return to the homeland create a variety of norms and patterns unknown to traditional Dominican culture. Thus, the “swinging process,” as we call the constant traveling of Dominicans to the island and back to other destinations, also prepares transmigrants to take risks and face challenges. Even though many Dominican migrants work in menial jobs, they endure risks and challenge “the system” by opening small shops, *bodegas* (grocery stores), beauty salons, and other small businesses often without knowing English, without a clear understanding of the city’s

business bureaucracy, and with small amounts of capital that, on many occasions, they borrow from family members and friends. Dominican migrants also participate as recipients and as providers in the educational system. Nowadays, Dominicans constitute a large percentage of the student population in New York City's elementary, secondary, and post-secondary public education system. Likewise, many Dominican and Dominican-American educators have become a part of that system. In other places, such as San Juan, Providence, and Boston, Dominicans are a growing part of the student population.

As a new, growing immigrant group in the United States, Dominicans are becoming increasingly visible within the small business sector—by now probably the largest group in New York City's Hispanic small business community. As participants in a more stable economy, Dominicans are able to share with their counterparts back in the island their U.S.-acquired wealth and “American” ideas. The sharing does not happen exclusively when the migrant returns to the island laden with gifts and stories to tell; it also occurs through a constant informal exchange via personal telephone conversations and the oral testimony of family members.

The transposition of language forms, life-styles, ways of thinking, and goods is responsible for the ambivalence many first-generation Dominican migrants experience when they return home. However, many never feel displaced from home because either “there” or “here” they have found a place similar to home with the language, music, consumer goods, and people with which they identify. This phenomenon is tangible in New York City and in Puerto Rico, where there are large concentrations of Dominicans and the exchanges with home, and with other Dominican nationals, occur on a daily basis.

Young second-generation Dominican migrants (also popularly known as Dominican-Yorks) have adjusted to the transnational-global life that the outside (or “other”) world—New York, generally—has opened for them. Undoubtedly, Dominicans have been successful in creating a transnational life, in maneuvering within their limited opportunities and resources (Pessar 1995, 71). Understanding that this geographical space that society and culture map onto does not necessarily constitute a nation (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 34), Dominicans have created a borderless nation outside the national territory from which they do not feel disconnected. The fact that they have easy contact with relatives back in the island, their frequent use of the Spanish language, the daily news they receive from the Dominican Republic, and an array of cultural patterns and norms they find in the host country inflict in them a sense of belonging. The longing to return is no longer affecting the young generation of Dominicans who reside overseas. For example, for

young Dominican migrants, New York City has been transformed into an extension of the island—with the exception of the dominant language and the weather (Molina 1998b). They seem to find no hindrance in adapting. English is not an obstacle for Dominicans to succeed and to adapt to the new nation; many build transnational lives without the use of the English language. In New York City's Dominican neighborhoods, such as Washington Heights, the English language is foreign; Spanish dominates. However, the Dominican modality of the Spanish language suffers a natural transformation once it comes into contact with English. That transformation is part of the transnational, swinging process that linguistic cultural patterns have followed. That process also occurs simultaneously from “here” to “there” and within the Dominican enclaves, where the Spanish spoken by Dominicans adopts not only those modalities created by previous immigrants from other countries, but by Dominicans themselves. The end result could be a linguistic modality some are already calling Dominicanish (as in Spanglish), which still needs to be studied.

The essays in this book seek to contribute not only to a better understanding of the Dominican case in particular but also of transmigration in general. First, the Dominican case clearly and convincingly shows how a transmigrant population can construct transnational networks that span several countries and continents. So far, most studies of transnational migration have examined a particular transmigrant group in the United States (e.g., Mexicans, Ecuadorans, Haitians, Filipinos). This volume will go beyond those confines to examine the broad spatial spectrum of Dominican migration that includes North and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe. Without any doubt, Dominicans are one of the most transnational people in Latin America.

Second, the essays in this volume contribute to explaining how transmigration has evolved in the Dominican case. Though Dominican transnational practices have been extensively described, few studies have analyzed how and when Dominicans—as a group or individually—“became” transnational. Given the very broad definition of transnationalism and the inherent complexities of the Dominican migratory experience, this is a complex task. Though economically Dominican migrants have been “transnational” since the 1970s (e.g., by continuously sending remittances), cultural and political transnationalization are phenomena of the 1980s and 1990s. What determines this progression? Is it time and numbers? Or are there other factors involved? Since not all Dominican migrants become “transnational” at the same time or at the same speed, is there a certain threshold, or it is a matter of degrees of transnationalization?<sup>5</sup>

Third—and in line with the previous argument—the essays in this volume

show that there is much more to transmigration than long-distance economic exchanges. Although transnational economic practices seem to be the main foundation of a transnational community, in the case of Dominicans cultural transnationalization is a strong element of cohesion among their overseas communities. The transnational culture of the Dominican people fosters migration, facilitates the insertion and adaptation of the transmigrant, keeps him or her in contact with the developments in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere, and influences the country's "native" culture.

Finally, though the essays in this book analyze at length the pervasiveness of transnational institutions and practices, they also acknowledge their limitations. Transnationalization is not the same everywhere, nor does it operate with the same intensity beyond the developed countries. Certainly, while Dominican transnationalization seems to have thrived in the permissive environment of New York City and its surrounding areas (where political correctness and the sheer magnitude of the Dominican community preclude major ethnic backlashes), the same cannot be said of other Dominican communities overseas.<sup>6</sup> For example, Dominicans in Spain are considerably less politically active, while Dominicans in Puerto Rico (particularly undocumented ones) often resort to concealing their real national origin and trying to "pass" as Puerto Ricans, a survival strategy facilitated by cultural commonalities and dictated by a xenophobic anti-Dominican bias that has recently surfaced in the island. Are the latter Dominican migrants then, less "transnational"?

A combination of political instability and uneven capitalist penetration, coupled with new transportation and communication technologies, have turned more than one million Dominicans into transnational migrants. Moreover, the need to escape an oppressing national reality, the desire to establish an identity abroad, and the curiosity that is part of Dominican idiosyncrasy have created a pathway to the transnationalization of Dominicans in and out of the Dominican Republic. The following section examines the recent past of the Dominican Republic in light of the arguments advanced by the transnationalism literature, and looks at how the Dominican people—like so many others in the developing world—have become transnational.

### Historical Origins of Dominican Transmigration

Like most former colonies of Spain in Latin America, the Dominican Republic inherited a legacy of centralized authoritarian rule. After achieving independence from Haiti in 1844 (after twenty-two years of occupation), and from Spain in 1865 (after four years of colonial reannexation), the country came to be ruled by a succession of military *caudillos* who reinforced the

authoritarian, anti-democratic tradition. Between 1916–1924, the Dominican Republic was occupied by U.S. military forces. The United States, as part of an imperial strategy, resorted to military intervention in the circum-Caribbean region to protect and defend its national interests, especially the Caribbean access routes to the Panama Canal, and to enforce the payment of external debts among the region's insolvent countries. The deep changes brought about by the U.S. military occupations also set the stage for a new breed of *caudillos*, who through their control over modern armed forces monopolized, centralized, and personalized power to an extent never seen before.

The strongman that emerged from the U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic was General Rafael L. Trujillo. He had been a cadet during the occupation who later rose to military prominence. In 1930, after ousting president Horacio Vásquez, he was “elected” into office. He did not relinquish power until his assassination in 1961. Trujillo's rule had most of the characteristics of a sultanistic regime: the use of coercive violence, deep-seated corruption, centralization of power in the figure of the leader, and ideological appeals to justify the regime's authoritarian tactics (Hartlyn 1998).

Migration—and even occasional travel—were jealously curtailed by the Trujillo dictatorship. Travel provided the opportunity for disaffected individuals to join the political exile community, and it was feared that travel would expose Dominicans to “dangerous” democratic ideas. Thus overseas travel was strictly restricted and the travelers' activities were monitored by the regime. As a result, very few Dominicans migrated abroad during the Trujillo era. Only 16,674 Dominicans legally migrated to the United States from 1931 to 1960 (see table 1.1). A small Dominican community developed in New York City during the first decades of the twentieth century, but it did not grow much between 1930–1961. Small communities of anti-Trujillo political exiles also developed in New York, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Venezuela. Things took a drastic turn after the dictator's assassination.

The period from Trujillo's death in 1961 to the U.S. military intervention of April 28, 1965, was characterized by political instability and—as a result—economic uncertainty. In rapid succession, the remnants of the dictatorship were dismantled and the Trujillo family left the country (November 1961); a transitional government led by a council of state restored a sense of normalcy and scheduled the first free elections in decades (December 1962); Juan Bosch of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Dominican Revolutionary Party, or PRD) assumed the presidency, only to be overthrown by a right-wing military coup (September 1963); a supposedly civilian triumvirate ruled the country while favoring military interests (1964–1965); and a “con-

stitutional” faction of the military tried to return Bosch to power, which led to the early stages of a civil war and the intervention of U.S. military forces “to prevent a second Cuba” (April 1965). These rapid developments and extralegal changes of government had a powerful impact on the Dominican economy, which stagnated during this period. The combination of political repression and economic uncertainty, plus the lifting of the restrictions on traveling abroad, led to the first upsurge in Dominican migration in decades.

The U.S. military intervention imposed political stability on the country, which was later guaranteed by the election of conservative Joaquín Balaguer in 1966. Balaguer, Trujillo’s former puppet president, had been living in exile in the United States, and he was the candidate favored by the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. He ran against a beleaguered Bosch, who had to face the opposition of entrenched military interests and of a people fearful of renewed violence. Balaguer held on to power for two more terms (1966–1978) by obtaining his reelection in questionable elections where—amid a climate of political repression from the military and death squads—most of the opposition abstained from participating. It was not until 1978, when the political opposition coalesced around the figure of PRD candidate S. Antonio Guzmán, that Balaguer was finally voted out of office.

Balaguer also led the Dominican Republic through a process of thorough economic restructuring, based on opening the country to foreign investment while protecting state-owned industries and certain private interests.<sup>7</sup> This distorted, dependent development model produced uneven results. For most of Balaguer’s first nine years in office the country experienced high growth rates (e.g., an average GDP growth rate of 9.4 percent between 1970–1975), to the extent that people talked about the “Dominican miracle.” Foreign—mostly U.S.—investment, as well as foreign aid, flowed into the country (Lozano 1985, 123, 193–215). Sugar (then the Dominican Republic’s main export product) also enjoyed good prices in the international market. However, this excellent macroeconomic performance was not accompanied by an equitable distribution of wealth. While a group of new millionaires flourished during Balaguer’s administrations, the poor simply became poorer. Moreover, the poor were commonly the target of state repression, and their socioeconomic claims were labeled “communist” and dealt with appropriately by the state security apparatus (Cassá 1991, chap. 3). Global capitalism, with all of its dire connotations for the poor, now firmly gripped the Dominican Republic.

The twelve-year administration of Balaguer certainly induced the migration of thousands of Dominicans abroad. Political repression and economic woes were its two main catalysts or “push” factors. But conditions in the United States also favored the migration of Dominicans to this destination. In

1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act, which greatly facilitated legal migration to the United States for individuals who had relatives living in this country. Moreover, the industrial centers of the northeastern United States sought cheap, unskilled labor, and that helped Dominicans—and other immigrants—find employment in this sector. Finally, another contributing factor was the tacit agreement between the U.S. government and the Balaguer administration to send “troublemakers” from the 1965 civil war to the United States, thus helping defuse the highly polarized political situation in the Dominican Republic (Mitchell 1992, 102). In the 1960s, 93,292 Dominicans were admitted as legal immigrants to the United States, primarily to New York, where an estimated 70 percent of them resided (see table 1.1; Hendricks 1978, 292). Another 636,058 were admitted with temporary visas—often overstaying in the United States—while others entered the country illegally (Georges 1990, 38). Regardless of the mode of entry or the legal status of these immigrants, one thing was certain: by the 1970s Dominican migration was reaching diasporic proportions in its magnitude, with 148,135 individuals legally admitted during that decade (see table 1.1). If the death of Trujillo was the spark that ignited Dominican migration, Balaguer’s social and economic policies were the fuel that propagated it.

Dominicans expected better times with the transition to the new PRD administration in 1978. Though the military staged a self-coup to try to keep Balaguer in power, its effort collapsed in less than forty-eight hours. A new political climate brought renewed hopes to the Dominican people. However, the PRD administrations’ economic performance crushed them. Both Guzmán (1978–1982) and his successor, Salvador Jorge Blanco (1982–1986), failed to revitalize the Dominican economy. On the contrary, their economic blunders plunged the country into a deeper crisis and almost brought it to the brink of bankruptcy (Espinal 1987). They resorted to extensive foreign borrowing and then failed to meet the International Monetary Fund’s conditions. Inflation went out of control and the Dominican currency devalued steadily during this period. For example, inflation rates went from 3.6 percent in 1978 to 37.6 percent in 1985, while the Dominican peso went (officially) from 1.00 peso per U.S. dollar in 1984 to 3.11 pesos per U.S. dollar in 1985 (Economist Intelligence Unit 1987, 8; 1990, 9, 12). Meanwhile, poor and middle-class Dominicans saw their purchasing power dwindle, and there were major food riots in 1984, with an estimated one hundred people killed by the government’s troops.

The economic crisis did not abate with the election of Balaguer to a new term in 1986. By taking advantage of the PRD’s dismal administrative record, Balaguer was able to convince the Dominican electorate that at least he was

an able administrator. He inherited a crippled economy, which his policies sank deeper into misery. By 1989, inflation had reached a shocking 59.5 percent, while the exchange rate had climbed to 8.53 pesos per U.S. dollar (Economist Intelligence Unit 1993, 10, 13). A gaping trade deficit curtailed the importation of vital inputs, and for the first time in recent memory gasoline was rationed, amid prolonged and economically crippling electric service blackouts. Once again, suffering Dominicans—including a growing proportion of the middle class—opted for migration as a solution to their plight.

The 1980s were boom years for Dominican migration. More than a quarter million Dominicans were legally admitted into the United States during that decade (see table 1.1), plus countless others entered through other means. For example, while in 1981 some 78,000 Dominicans entered the United States with nonimmigrant visas, by 1990 that figure had more than doubled to about 189,000 (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999, 113). Several thousand more left for destinations in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe. The new, freer political climate in the Dominican Republic also meant that migrants during the 1980s were mostly of economic origin. The economic crisis of the “lost decade” (as the 1980s were known in Latin America) certainly propelled Dominican migration to an unprecedented scale. By the 1980s, Dominican migration had become a truly transnational phenomenon. As the chapters in this book will show, Dominicans developed migratory webs that transcended state boundaries, economic systems, national cultures, and traditional social strata.

Though inflation was put under control during the 1990s, Dominican migration continued unchecked. The Dominican Republic’s macroeconomic picture certainly looks better now than during the chaotic 1980s, but an underlying state of permanent economic crisis persists. Unemployment and underemployment are still high in an economy that has divested from agriculture and into tourism, free trade zones (dominated by assembly industries), and other service sector activities, but where major challenges, contradictions, and inconsistencies still persist. Fiscal frailty, high interest rates, a high external deficit, low monetary reserves, fluctuating oil prices, low tax collection rates, an inefficient and unfair tax system, burdensome and restrictive banking laws, confusing investment laws, lack of well-established rules for the protection of foreign investments, an expensive and inefficient bureaucracy, and low levels of investment in education and health are among some of the many complex factors behind the persistence of low levels of socioeconomic development in the Dominican Republic (International Monetary Fund 1999; Héctor Cordero-Guzmán, personal communication)

Politically, the system is still characterized by corruption, personalism, authoritarianism, and the reluctance of electoral *caudillos* to leave their po-

sitions of preeminence in party politics. Even when a new generation of political leaders have replaced the old *caudillos*, their political style does not differ much from their predecessors. Dominican electoral politics is still based on charisma, a populist discourse, and a bitter struggle for the system's scarce spoils. The Dominican political system also suffers from an acute lack of meaningful participation among its citizenry, lack of respect for the rule of law, and a constitution that does not respond to the people's needs. For the majority of the population, political participation simply consists of going to the polls every few years to elect a president.

Recent presidential elections have also been questionable, thus making the system lose legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Balaguer was again reelected in 1990, by a small margin, in an election denounced as fraudulent by the opposition's Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (Dominican Liberation Party, or PLD). In 1994, Balaguer won again, this time amid documented charges from the PRD that as many as two hundred thousand of its sympathizers had been disfranchised and prevented from voting. A post-electoral crisis lasted for close to three months, until the three major parties agreed to let Balaguer serve a reduced two-year term and then scheduled new presidential elections in 1996.<sup>8</sup> With Balaguer prevented from running, the 1996 presidential election was won by Leonel Fernández of the PLD. Ironically, his victory was made possible by Balaguer's endorsement during the run-off election. In 1998, the electoral pendulum swung back with a major victory for the PRD in the congressional and municipal elections of that year; in 2000, the PRD's Hipólito Mejía easily won the presidential election; and in the 2002 elections, the PRD retained overwhelming control of Congress. From spending years in the opposition, the PRD has quickly become the hegemonic party in Dominican politics.

For the past three and one-half decades, Dominican politicians from all persuasions have promised in vain the abatement of the country's economic woes, with few visible results. Their failure, coupled with a succession of questionable elections and an exclusionary political system, have contributed to the persistence—and growth—of Dominican transnational migration. Moreover, the development of social networks stretching from the Dominican Republic to overseas communities has sustained Dominican migration during the last decade. From 1991 to 2000, Dominican migration to the United States surpassed the figure for the previous decade: 335,251 Dominicans legally migrated during this period, while additionally there are an estimated 75,000 Dominicans residing illegally in the United States (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999, 2003). Moreover, Dominicans are migrating to even more destinations now, including several European coun-

tries (for example, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) and Caribbean islands (for example, St. Thomas, Antigua, and St. Maarten).

Recently released figures from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that there were 764,945 Dominicans residing in the United States at the time of the 2000 census (Guzmán 2001). However, these figures—as well as those for other Hispanic groups—have been questioned on the basis of poor question design. Question 5 of the 2000 census questionnaire asked individuals if they were Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. While Mexicans/Mexican-Americans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans had their own separate box to check, other Hispanic groups were asked to check a different box and then write in their group's name. More than six million individuals who checked the “other” box did not indicate a particular group, but instead wrote “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or left it blank. That could point to a severe undercount among these “other” Hispanic groups who did not have a box with their national origin already indicated, including Dominicans. Table 1.2 provides a set of revised figures for the number of Dominicans in the United States based on growth rates from Current Population Survey data and prepared by the University at Albany's Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research.<sup>9</sup>

As the table indicates, though New York still has the largest concentration of Dominicans in the United States, its percentage of the total Dominican population on U.S. soil has dropped. Dominicans are spreading out into other states, mainly New Jersey, Florida, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, as indicated by growth rates over the past decade. This dispersion of Dominicans into other states and away from New York follows similar patterns by previous Hispanic immigrant groups, most notably Puerto Ricans, who decades earlier centered around New York City and are now dispersed over other states.

The Dominican experience has also mirrored that of other Hispanic groups, such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, in the fact that most come from—or currently belong to—lower-income brackets. As recent studies have indicated, poverty rates for Dominicans are high and their income levels are among the lowest for Hispanics (Hernández and Rivera-Batiz 1997; Castro and Boswell 2002). These are related to below average educational skills for Dominican immigrants and high rates of employment in declining economic sectors, such as manufacturing. Fortunately, there is hope in the second generation, which seems to be benefiting from access to better educational opportunities in the United States, as reflected by their higher incomes and employment in professional or skilled occupations (Castro and Boswell 2002).